

Wandering off the Beaten Path:

Less Traveled Long Distance Trails in the Appalachian Mountains

“Are you looking for a new adventure? . . . Been itching to return to long-distance hiking... anxious for something a bit more challenging” (Jenkins). Try wandering off the beaten path in the Appalachian Mountains.

The Appalachian Mountains in North America, range from the southern foothills in Alabama north into Labrador and Newfoundland. They are identifiable through 18 states and 5 Canadian provinces. All this territory and yet it may come as a surprise to many that the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) is not the only long-distance trail available to hike in the system.

As long-distance hiking becomes more and more popular trails like the AT see more hikers, to the point of overuse. People wishing to get away from it all may want to consider a less traveled path.

Some of these less traveled trails interlink more than once with the AT and so can provide the bonus of a loop hike. Other trails connecting to the AT can offer an AT thru hiker the opportunity to continue hiking well beyond Katahdin. Shorter trails present the prospect of thru-hiking a trail without needing to quit one's job for 6 months. Hiking one of the shorter trails can also serve as a shakedown in preparation for a potential longer distance hike. This critical preparation not only helps hikers make great gear decisions but will help them to discover if they even would enjoy a 6 month hike.

Most of the trails are more remote than the AT and offer less in the way of hiker amenities or hostels. Scott Jenkins writes of his experience thru hiking the Tuscarora Trail, one of the trails listed below: “The experience was just what I was seeking, rugged, remote, and isolated, this trail presented physical challenges and provided rewarding views.” What will your experience be?

Below is a spread sheet of trails that are over 100 miles in length in the Appalachian Chain.

Citations: Scott Jenkins, Considering the Tuscarora Trail. ALDHA Blaze, September 2020 vol 21

Trail Name	Connects to AT	Miles	States	Website	Description
Allegheny Trail	yes	330	PA, WV, VA	https://www.wvscenictrails.org/allegheny-trail	
American Discovery Trail	yes	5000	DE->CA	https://discoverytrail.org	Multi-use
Baker Trail	no	132	PA	https://www.pahikes.com/trails/baker-trail	
Bartram Trail	no	153	NC, GA	https://ncbartramtrail.org/	
Benton McKaye Trail	yes	300	NC, GA	http://www.bmta.org/	Loop possible with the AT
Buckeye Trail	no	1444	OH	http://www.buckeyetrail.org/trail.php	
Cohos Trail	yes	162	NH,	https://www.cohostrail.org/	Rough and wild, map skills needed
Confederation Trail	no	279	PEI Canada	https://www.tourismpei.com/pei-confederation-trail	Multi-use shares 112K with IAT
Cumberland Trail	yes	175	TN	https://www.cumberlandtrail.org	175 miles are not continuous
East Coast Trail	no	165	Newfoundland	https://www.eastcoasttrail.com	170 additional miles under construction
Finger Lakes Trail	no	557	NY,PA	https://fingerlakestrail.org/	
Florida Trail	no	1300	FL	https://www.floridatrail.org/	
Great Eastern Trail	yes	1600	AL → NY	http://www.greateastertrail.net/	Was developed as an AT alternative
Horse Shoe Trail	yes	140	PA	https://www.kta-hike.org/horse-shoe-trail.html	Multi-use
International AT	yes	1900	ME, CA (NB → NF)	https://iat-sia.org	Passport required
Long Path	yes	358	NY	https://www.nynjtc.org/region/long-path	
Long Trail	yes	272	VT	https://www.greenmountainclub.org/the-long-trail/	Shares 104.5 miles with the AT
Mason-Dixon Trail	yes	193	MD, DE, PA	https://masondixontrail.wixsite.com/mdts	30% Road walk
Mountain to Sea Trail	yes	1175	NC	https://mountainstoseatrail.org/the-trail/	700 miles complete
New England Trail	no	215	CT, MA, NH	https://newenglandtrail.org/about-trail	Few places to camp
North Country Trail	no	4600	MT → VT	https://northcountrytrail.org/	
Northville-Placid Trail	no	138	NY	http://www.nptrail.org/	Some multi-use
Palmetto Trail	no	500	SC	https://palmettoconservation.org/palmetto-trail/	
Paumanok Path	no	125	NY	https://hikeli.com/index.php/paumanok-path/	
PA Mid State Trail	yes	327	PA	https://hike-mst.org/index.php/the-trail	
Pinhoti Trail	no	335	AL, GA	http://www.pinhotitrailalliance.org/	
Potomac Heritage Trail	yes	830	PA, MD, DC, VA	https://www.nps.gov/pohe/index.htm	Multi-use
Sheltowee Trace	no	282	KY, TN	https://www.sheltoweetrace.com/	
Tuscarora Trail	yes	252	VA, WV, MD, PA	https://www.hikethetuscarora.org/	Loop possible with the AT